

Colin Powell dies, exemplary general stained by Iraq claims

By R. BURNS, E. TUCKER and E. PUTMAN

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP)—Colin Powell, the barrier-breaking soldier and diplomat who served Democratic and Republican presidents in war and peace but whose sterling reputation was stained by his faulty claims to justify the U.S. war in Iraq, died Monday of COVID-19 complications. He was 84. A veteran of the Vietnam War, Powell spent 35 years in the Army and rose to the rank of four-star general. In 1989 he became the first Black chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In that role he oversaw the U.S. invasion of Panama and later the U.S. invasion of Kuwait to oust the Iraqi army in 1991.

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In this Sept. 25, 1991, file photo, Gen. Colin Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, speaks on Capitol Hill in Washington, at a House Armed Services subcommittee.

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Colin Powell dies, exemplary general stained by Iraq claims

Continued from Front

A decade later he joined President George W. Bush's Cabinet as the first Black secretary of state.

His legacy was marred when, in February 2003, he went before the U.N. Security Council as secretary of state and made the case for U.S. war against Iraq at a moment of great international skepticism. He cited faulty information claiming Saddam Hussein had secretly stashed weapons of mass destruction. Iraq's claims that it had no such weapons represented "a web of lies," he told the world body.

In announcing his death on social media, Powell's family said he had been fully vaccinated against the coronavirus.

"We have lost a remarkable and loving husband, father and grandfather and a great American," the family said. Powell had been treated at Walter Reed National Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland.

Peggy Ciffrino, Powell's longtime aide, said he had been treated over the past



In this Feb. 5, 2003 file photo, Secretary of State Colin Powell holds up a vial he said could contain anthrax as he presents evidence of Iraq's alleged weapons programs to the United Nations Security Council.

few years for multiple myeloma, a blood cancer. The Powell family's social media post did not address whether Powell had any underlying illnesses.

Multiple myeloma impairs the body's ability to fight infection, and studies have shown that those cancer patients don't get as much protection from the COVID-19 vaccines as healthier people. At the White House, President Joe Biden said Powell "embodied the highest ideals of both warrior and diplomat."

Noting Powell's rise from a childhood in a fraying New York City neighborhood, Biden said, "He believed in the promise of America because he lived it. And he devoted much of his life to making that promise a reality for so many others."

Flags were lowered at the White House and State Department. After the 9/11 attacks in 2001, Powell was the first American official to publicly lay the blame on Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network. He made a lightning trip to Pakistan in

October of that year to demand that then-Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf cooperate with the United States in going after the Afghanistan-based group, which also had a presence in Pakistan, where bin Laden was later killed.

As George W. Bush's first secretary of state, Powell led a State Department that was dubious of the military and intelligence communities' conviction that Saddam possessed or was developing weapons of mass destruction. And yet, despite his reservations, he presented the administration's case that Saddam indeed posed a major regional and global threat in a speech to the U.N. Security Council in February 2003. The following month, Bush gave the go-ahead for the invasion. The U.N. speech, replete with Powell's display of a vial of what he said could have been a biological weapon, was seen as a low point in his career, although he had removed some elements from the remarks that he deemed to have been based on poor intelligence assessments. The U.S. overthrow of Saddam ended the rule of a brutal dictator. But the power vacuum and lawlessness that followed the invasion unleashed years of deadly sectarian fighting and chaos that killed countless Iraqi civilians, sparked a years-long insurgency, and unintentionally tilted the balance of power in the Middle East toward a U.S. rival, Iran. No Iraqi weapons of mass destruction were ever found.

Powell maintained in a 2012 interview with The Associated Press that on balance, the U.S. succeeded in Iraq. "I think we had a lot of successes," he said. "Iraq's ter-

rible dictator is gone."

Saddam was captured by U.S. forces while hiding out in northern Iraq in December 2003 and later executed by the Iraqi government. But the war dragged on. President Barack Obama pulled U.S. troops out of Iraq in 2011, but he sent advisers back in 2014 after the Islamic State group swept into the country from Syria and captured large swaths of Iraqi territory.

Bush said Monday that he and former first lady Laura Bush were "deeply saddened" by Powell's death.

"He was a great public servant" and "widely respected at home and abroad," Bush said. "And most important, Colin was a family man and a friend. Laura and I send Alma and their children our sincere condolences as they remember the life of a great man."

Powell gained national prominence under Republican presidents and considered a presidential bid of his own, but ultimately moved away from the party. He endorsed Democrats in the past four presidential elections, starting with Obama. He emerged as a vocal Donald Trump critic in recent years, describing Trump as "a national disgrace" who should have been removed from office through impeachment. Following the Jan. 6 storming of the U.S. Capitol, Powell said he no longer considered himself a Republican. No child of privilege, Powell rose through the military ranks and then became the nation's chief diplomat. "Mine is the story of a black kid of no early promise from an immigrant family of limited means who was raised in the South Bronx," he wrote in his 1995 autobiography "My American Journey." □

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U.S. says Guantanamo detainee can pen letter about torture

By JESSICA GRESKO and MARK SHERMAN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration says it will allow a Guantanamo Bay detainee to provide information to Polish officials about his torture in CIA custody following the 9/11 attacks.

The decision from the Biden administration was included in a letter government lawyers filed Friday with the Supreme Court. The administration said it will allow the detainee, Abu Zubaydah, to send a declaration that could be given to Polish officials investigating his treatment in a secret CIA facility there.

The government said detainees' communications normally are limited to family. But the government noted that a court case in the United States involving Zubaydah already includes a public but redacted declaration from him describing his treatment in CIA custody. Any declaration written for Polish officials would be subject to a "security review," the government



This undated file photo provided by U.S. Central Command, shows Abu Zubaydah, date and location unknown.

Associated Press

said, but it "would not prevent him from describing his treatment while in CIA custody." Information in the letter "that could prejudice the security interests of the United States" could still be redacted, the government said.

Zubaydah was thought to be a high-ranking member of al-Qaida when he was captured in Pakistan in 2002, and the government still says he was "an associate and longtime terrorist ally of Osama bin Laden." But Zubaydah's lawyers say the CIA was

mistaken in believing he was a high-ranking member of al-Qaida, the terrorist group that carried out the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on New York and Washington. The Biden administration's court filing follows arguments the Supreme Court heard in a case involving him earlier this month. The case is about a request by Zubaydah and his lawyer to question two former CIA contractors about Zubaydah's detention in Poland. The Biden administration, like the Trump administration before it, has opposed the questioning.

The fact that Zubaydah was held at so-called CIA black sites in both Thailand and Poland has been widely reported. The U.S. government has also allowed the disclosure of information about how he was treated. But the government has stopped short of acknowledging the locations of the black sites set up after 9/11 to gather intelligence about terrorist plots against Americans. The government has cited national security and its commitments

to foreign partners in opposing the testimony of the former CIA contractors in Zubaydah's case.

The high court is expected to rule in the case in coming months. Zubaydah spent four years at CIA black sites before being transferred to Guantanamo in 2006. According to a 2014 Senate report on the CIA program, among other things Zubaydah was waterboarded more than 80 times and spent over 11 days in a coffin-size confinement box. The extreme interrogation techniques used as part of the program are now widely viewed as torture. The justices will next hear arguments in cases beginning Nov. 1.

On Monday the high court also announced the addition of two cases to its calendar and released two unsigned opinions blocking cases against police officers accused of using excessive force. In one, officers in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, fatally shot a man wielding a hammer. In the other, a suspect sued after a Union City, Califor-

nia, officer "briefly placed his knee" on the suspect's back while he was being handcuffed, the court wrote. In both cases, the justices said lower courts were wrong to deny the officers "qualified immunity," a legal doctrine that offers protection from lawsuits.

The two cases the court agreed to hear involve Indian Country. In one, the justices will consider an appeal from the Ysleta del Sur Pueblo tribe near El Paso, Texas, over its right to operate bingo games. The federally recognized tribe has been enmeshed in a legal fight with the state of Texas reaching back decades.

The other case concerns the double jeopardy clause of the Constitution's Fifth Amendment that bars a second prosecution on the same charges. The issue for the justices is whether a criminal conviction in an Indian court prevents federal prosecutors from pursuing charges based on the same conduct. The case could have major implications for the hundreds of tribal courts. □

U.S. formally removes Colorado River fish's endangered status

By JAMES ANDERSON
Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — The humpback chub, a rare fish found only in the Colorado River basin, has been brought back from the brink of extinction after decades of protection, though work must continue to ensure its survival, federal authorities said Monday in reclassifying the species from endangered to threatened status.

The fish, which gets its name from a fleshy bump behind its head, was first listed as endangered in 1967, its habitat severely disrupted by dam construction. Its numbers also declined with the introduction of predatory, non-native aquatic species.

Its change in status formally takes effect Nov. 17 under a rule published Monday in the Federal Register by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Environmentalists oppose the endangered status delisting. They argue the humpback chub's future remains in peril as a megadrought, largely attributable to climate change, diminishes flows in the Colorado River basin, which includes seven Southwestern U.S. states and Mexico.

The delisting comes two months after the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation declared an unprecedented water shortage on the river. It also follows a July Fish and Wildlife proposal to move another rare Colorado River fish, the razorback sucker, from endangered status to threatened.

Jen Pelz, Wild Rivers Program director at the environmental group WildEarth Guardians, said in a statement that it was "perplexing that the (U.S. Interior Department) would be going to so much trouble to reclassify these endan-

gered fish at a time when so much uncertainty exists regarding climate change and the ability to continue to fund the suite of heroic measures it undertakes annually for these species to survive."

Both the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Bureau of Reclamation are part of the Interior Department.

The government considers a species "endangered" if it is in danger of extinction in all or much of its historical habitat. Protections are kept for "threatened" species, and that status means biologists can take steps to improve the overall population even if some of the fish might be hurt.

Fish and Wildlife said it finalized another rule to ensure that work with other parties — including private, state, tribal and federal agencies — continues to maintain its existing habitat and diminish the threat from preda-



This undated photo provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service shows a humpback chub in the Colorado River in Colorado near the Utah border.

Associated Press

tors and drought-induced water flows, among other preservation efforts.

The largest population of the humpback chub is in the Grand Canyon, with more than 12,000 adult fish. Four smaller wild populations are upstream of Lake Powell in Utah and in Colorado canyons. The species thrives in rocky waterways with swift currents but

needs warm and muddy water to spawn.

The fish once had a broader range, but the construction of the Flaming Gorge Dam in Wyoming and Hoover Dam on the Nevada-Arizona border led to two other populations of the species becoming extinct. An eighth population in Dinosaur National Monument also is considered gone. □

D.C. suspends most of its Metro trains over safety issue

By **ASHRAF KHALIL**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) —

Washington's regional Metro system abruptly pulled more than half its fleet of trains from service early Monday morning over a lingering problem with the wheels and axles that caused a dramatic derailling last week. The ruling promises to complicate daily travel and commutes for thousands of riders for an unspecified length of time while the National Transportation Safety Board investigates the issue.

The Metro authority's safety commission ordered the withdrawal of the entire 7000-series line of trains overnight. The Kawasaki-made 7000-series are the newest set of trains in service and the 748 cars comprise about 60% of the fleet. NTSB Chair Jennifer Homendy told reporters Monday that a design flaw had been identified which caused the trains' wheels to spread too wide on the axles, allowing the carriage to slip off the tracks.

"We're at the preliminary stage of our investigation — just trying to collect data and information," Homendy said. "This could have resulted in a cata-



In this March 12, 2015 file photo, passengers wait on the platform before boarding a train at the U Street Metro Station in Washington, part of the public mass transit network for Washington.

Associated Press

strophic event."

The wheel issue is being blamed for a incident last week in which a train car slipped off the tracks on the Metro's blue line near Arlington Cemetery. Homendy said the car had apparently derailed once and then re-connected with the rails by itself, before derailling a second time. Some passengers were trapped in a tunnel in a dark train car and had to be evacuated on foot.

The safety ruling had al-

ready snarled commutes across the nation's capital and the intertwined communities of northern Virginia and southern Maryland. Passengers on social media reported widespread delays with commuters waiting up to 45 minutes between trains and crowding chaotically into whatever space was available.

The problem comes as WMATA is working to attract more riders, after the numbers plummeted due to the COVID-19 pandem-

ic. Overall rider numbers remain at a fraction of pre-pandemic levels, but are expected to increase steadily as offices reopen and tourists return to Washington.

It remains to be seen whether the axle issue spreads to other regional commuter systems. Kawasaki supplies trains to the MTA in New York City, among other systems, and Homendy said the NTSB "may at some point" issue a recommendation for in-

spections of all similar train cars around the country.

"If you are a transit agency operating in the United States and you're listening, make sure you are checking your cars as well," she said. The incident promises to shine a potentially harsh light on WMATA, the regional transit authority which suffered a string of embarrassing and dangerous derailments and track fires, several years ago but claimed to have addressed its issues.

Homendy revealed Monday that WMATA had been aware of the potential problem since 2017, but hadn't informed the NTSB, and that minor incidents with the wheels had been escalating since then. She said WMATA was aware of 18 such failures in 2021, and the current round of emergency inspections revealed an additional 21 failures — for a total of 39 this year alone. Homendy said the inspections were ongoing that "that number could go up" in the coming days.

The local Metro authority has not commented on this issue, other than announcements of reduced service and expected delays. □



In this Tuesday, Oct. 16, 2018, file photo, Bill Gates, former CEO and co-founder of the Microsoft Corporation, arrives for a meeting in Berlin.

Associated Press

REDMOND, Wash. (AP)

— Microsoft executives in 2008 warned Bill Gates to stop sending flirtatious emails to a female employee but dropped the matter after he told them he would stop, the company revealed Monday.

The Wall Street Journal was first to report that Brad Smith, then Microsoft's general counsel and now its president and vice chair, and another executive met with Gates after the company discovered inappropriate emails to a midlevel

Microsoft says it warned Bill Gates about flirting in 2008

employee. The newspaper reported that Gates didn't deny the exchanges, and members of the Microsoft board who were briefed on them declined to take further action because there wasn't any physical interaction between Gates and the employee.

Microsoft declined comment Monday except to confirm the Journal's reporting. Smith didn't return a request for comment made through the company.

Gates' private office said in a written statement that "these claims are false, recycled rumors from sources who have no direct knowledge, and in some cases have significant conflicts of

interest." It declined further comment.

The reported 2008 warning came more than a decade before similar alleged behavior led the tech giant to hire a law firm in 2019 to investigate a letter from an engineer who said she had a sexual relationship with Gates over several years. That investigation preceded Gates' departure from Microsoft's board last year, but didn't come to light publicly until after Bill Gates and Melinda French Gates announced in May they had decided to end their marriage of 27 years. The divorce was finalized in August.

The former couple still jointly runs the Bill & Melinda

Gates Foundation.

Gates was Microsoft's CEO until 2000 and since then has gradually scaled back his involvement in the company he started with Paul Allen in 1975. He transitioned out of a day-to-day role in Microsoft in 2008 and served as chairman of the board until 2014.

Microsoft spokesperson Frank Shaw told the Journal that the 2008 warning from company executives happened shortly before Gates retired as a full-time employee. Shaw told the newspaper that Gates had suggested meeting the employee outside of work in emails that were flirtatious and inappropriate but "not overtly sexual." □

Russia suspends its mission at NATO, shuts alliance's office

By JIM HEINTZ

Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia on Monday suspended its mission at NATO and ordered the closure of the alliance's office in Moscow in retaliation for NATO's expulsion of Russian diplomats. Earlier this month, NATO withdrew the accreditation of eight Russian officials to its Brussels headquarters, saying it believes they have been secretly working as Russian intelligence officers. NATO also halved the size of Moscow's team at its headquarters from 20 to 10. Moscow has dismissed the accusations as baseless. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov delivered Moscow's response Monday, announcing the suspension of Russia's mission at NATO and the closure of the alliance's military liaison and information offices in the Russian capital. He charged that the alliance's action has confirmed that "NATO isn't interested in any kind of equal dialogue or joint work," adding that "we don't see any need to keep pretending that there could be any shift in the foreseeable future." Lavrov added that contacts between the Western military alliance and Russia could be maintained through the Russian Embassy in Belgium. "As a result of NATO's deliberate moves, we have practically no conditions for elementary diplomatic work and in response to NATO's actions we suspend the work of our permanent mission to NATO, including the work of the chief military envoy, probably from Nov. 1. Or it may take several more days," Lavrov said. Russia's Foreign Ministry said in a separate statement that NATO's actions "confirm that they are not interested in an equal dialogue and joint work to deescalate military-political tensions." "The alliance's line towards our country is becoming more and more aggressive," the ministry noted. "The 'Russian threat' is inflated in order to strengthen the internal unity of the alliance,

to create the appearance of its 'relevance' in modern geopolitical conditions." NATO spokesperson Oana Lungescu said the alliance has taken note of Lavrov's statement, but added it hasn't yet received an official notice from Moscow. German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said in Luxembourg that "this decision taken in Moscow will further prolong the difficult situation we're in, this frosty period that's been going on for some time," adding that "this will put a further serious strain on relations. "Germany has repeatedly pushed for dialogue with Russia within NATO over the past years," Maas noted. "We have to recognize once more, that Russia apparently no longer is. That is more



In this handout photo released by the Russian Foreign Ministry Press Service, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov speaks on the side of the meeting dedicated to the 25th anniversary of the House of Russian Diaspora named after Alexander Solzhenitsyn in Moscow, Russia, Monday, Oct. 18, 2021.

Associated Press

than regrettable." The Russian mission isn't based at NATO's headquarters, but in the south of the Belgian capital, Brussels. □



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'He lied': Iraqis still blame Powell for role in Iraq war

By **QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA**
and **ZEINA KARAM**

Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — For many Iraqis, the name Colin Powell conjures up one image: the man who as U.S. secretary of state went before the U.N. Security Council in 2003 to make the case for war against their country.

Word of his death Monday at age 84 dredged up feelings of anger in Iraq toward the former general and diplomat, one of several Bush administration officials whom they hold responsible for a disastrous U.S.-led invasion that led to decades of death, chaos and violence in Iraq. His U.N. testimony was a key part of events that they say had a heavy cost for Iraqis and others in the Middle East. "He lied, lied and lied," said Maryam, a 51-year-old Iraqi writer and mother of two in northern Iraq who spoke on condition her last name not be used because one of her children is studying in the United States.

"He lied, and we are the ones who got stuck with never-ending wars," she added. As chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Powell oversaw the Persian Gulf war to oust the Iraqi army in 1991 after Iraqi leader Sad-



In this Dec. 14, 2010, file photo, Iraqi journalist Muntadher al-Zaidi speaks to The Associated Press during the signing of his book, "The Last Salute to President Bush," in Beirut, Lebanon.

Associated Press

dam Hussein invaded Kuwait. But Iraqis remember Powell more for his U.N. presentation justifying the invasion of their country more than a decade later by casting Saddam as a major global threat who possessed weapons of mass destruction, even displaying a vial of what he said could have been a biological weapon. Powell had called Iraq's claims that it had no such weapons "a web of lies." No WMD were ever found, however, and

the speech was later derided as a low point in his career. "I am saddened by the death of Colin Powell without being tried for his crimes in Iraq. ... But I am sure that the court of God will be waiting for him," tweeted Muntadher al-Zaidi, an Iraqi journalist who vented his outrage at the U.S. by throwing his shoes at then-President George W. Bush during a 2008 news conference in Baghdad. In 2011, Powell told Al Jazeera he regretted pro-

viding misleading intelligence that led the U.S. invasion, calling it a "blot on my record." He said a lot of sources cited by the intelligence community were wrong. But in a 2012 interview with The Associated Press, Powell maintained that on balance, the U.S. "had a lot of successes" because "Iraq's terrible dictator is gone." Saddam was captured by U.S. forces while hiding in northern Iraq in December 2003 and later executed by

the Iraqi government.

But the insurgency that emerged from the U.S. occupation grew into deadly sectarian violence that killed countless Iraqi civilians, and the war dragged on far longer than had been predicted by the Bush administration and eventually helped give rise to the Islamic State group. President Barack Obama pulled U.S. troops out of Iraq in 2011 but sent advisers back in three years later after the Islamic State group swept in from Syria and captured large swaths of both countries.

Powell's U.N. testimony "resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of Iraqis. This blood is on his hands," said Muayad al-Jashami, a 37-year-old Iraqi who works with nongovernmental organizations. While he did not suffer direct losses, al-Jashami said he continues to struggle with stress and panic attacks as a result of growing up with war, displacement, and years of terrorist bombings in the country. Aqeel al-Rubai, 42, who owns a clothes and cosmetics shop in Baghdad, said he doesn't care if Powell regretted the faulty information he gave on WMD. □

Officials: Iraq arrests mastermind of deadly 2016 bombing

By **QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA**
Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraq said Monday it has detained the mastermind behind a deadly 2016 bombing in a Baghdad shopping center, which killed around 300 people and wounded 250.

The suicide car bombing in the central Karradah district was the deadliest attack by a single bomber in the Iraqi capital after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion that toppled Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.

Two Iraqi intelligence officials said the man identified as Ghazwan al-Zobai, an Iraqi, was detained during a complex operation that was carried out with the cooperation of a neighboring country they

did not name. He had been tracked by authorities for months.

They told The Associated Press that al-Zobai was detained in an unidentified foreign country and trans-

ported to Iraq two days ago. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak of the operation on the record.

The 29-year-old al-Zobai

was an al-Qaida militant when he was imprisoned by the Americans in Iraq at Cropper prison until 2008, and then escaped from Abu Ghraib prison in 2013. He joined the Islamic State group after that.

The officials said al-Zobai plotted many attacks in Iraq, the most infamous of which was the 2016 bombing in Karrada in 2016. He operated under the Alias Abu Obaida.

Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi tweeted news of the arrest later Monday, describing al-Zobai as the "primary culprit behind the Karrada atrocity and many others."

At least 292 people died from the bombing, most of them from an ensuing fire that turned the Hadi shop-

ping center into an inferno. The blaze was fed by a tin-dbox of shops filled with clothing and oil-based perfumes for sale and lined with flammable panels.

Al-Zobai's arrest came in the second such operation conducted by the Iraqi National Intelligence Service since Iraq's federal elections Oct. 10.

Iraqi officials said they captured Sami Jasim, an IS leader last Monday in a similar operation abroad. Jasim had a \$5 million bounty on his head from the U.S. State Department's Rewards for Justice program, which describes him as having been "instrumental in managing finances for IS terrorist operations." □



In this July 3, 2016 file photo, Iraqi women wait to hear about family members who went missing after a bomb hit Karradah, a busy shopping district in the center of Baghdad, Iraq.

Associated Press

U.S., Haiti seek release of 17 missionaries snatched by gang

By DÁNICA COTO and
EVENS SANON

Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP)

— American officials are working with Haitian authorities to try to secure the release of 12 adults and five children connected with a U.S.-based missionary group who were abducted over the weekend by a gang notorious for killings, kidnappings and extortion.

Police say the group was snatched Saturday by the 400 Mawozo gang in the community of Ganthier, which lies within the gang's territory in the Croix-des-Bouquets area east of the capital of Port-au-Prince.

As authorities sought the release of the 16 Americans and one Canadian from the Ohio-based Christian Aid Ministries, local unions and other organizations launched a strike Monday to protest Haiti's worsening security.

The streets of Port-au-Prince and other cities were largely empty as public transportation drivers stayed home. Businesses and schools also closed to join the strike. Barricades of burning fires closed off some streets in the capital and in other cities, including Les Cayes in southern Haiti, with some people throwing rocks at the occasional car that drove past.

Only a handful of moto taxi drivers like Marc Saint-Pierre zoomed through Port-au-Prince looking for customers. He said he was attacked for working on Monday but had no choice.

"I have children, and I have to bring food to my house today."

The Western Hemisphere's poorest nation is again struggling with a spike in gang-related kidnappings that had diminished in recent months, after President Jovenel Moïse was fatally shot at his private residence on July 7 and a magnitude 7.2 earthquake killed more than 2,200 people in August.

"Everyone is concerned. They're kidnapping from all social classes," Méhu



Children stand in the courtyard of the Maison La Providence de Dieu orphanage in Ganthier, Croix-des-Bouquets, Haiti, Sunday, Oct. 17, 2021, where a gang abducted 17 missionaries from a U.S.-based organization.

Changeux, president of Haiti's Association of Owners and Drivers, told Magik9 radio station.

He said the work stoppage would continue until the government could guarantee people's safety.

The kidnapping of the missionaries came just days after high-level U.S. officials visited Haiti and promised more resources for Haiti's National Police, including another \$15 million to help reduce gang violence, which this year has displaced thousands of Haitians who now live in temporary shelters in increasingly unhygienic conditions.

The U.S. State Department said Sunday that it was in regular contact with senior Haitian authorities and would continue to work with them and interagency partners.

"The welfare and safety of U.S. citizens abroad is one of the highest priorities of the Department of State," the agency said in a statement.

Christian Aid Ministries said the kidnapped group included seven women, five men and five children, including a 2-year-old.

The organization said they were taken while on a trip to visit an orphanage.

A sign on the door at the

organization's headquarters in Berlin, Ohio — the center of Amish tourism — said it was closed due to the kidnapping situation.

"Join us in praying for those who are being held hostage, the kidnappers and the families, friends and churches of those affected," Christian Aid Ministries said in a statement.

"As an organization, we commit this situation to God and trust him to see us through."

An annual report issued last year by Christian Aid Ministries said its American staffers had returned to their base in Haiti after a nine-month absence "due to political unrest" and noted the "uncertainty and difficulties" that arise from such instability.

Nearly a year ago, Haitian police issued a wanted poster for the alleged leader of the 400 Mawozo gang, Wilson Joseph, on charges including murder, attempted murder, kidnapping, auto theft and the hijacking of trucks carrying goods.

He goes by the nickname "Lanmò Sanjou," which means "death doesn't know which day it's coming."

Amid the spike in kidnappings, gangs have demanded ransoms ranging

pared with a total of 234 for all of 2020, said a report last month by the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti.

Gangs have been accused of kidnapping schoolchildren, doctors, police officers, busloads of passengers and others as they grow more powerful.

In April, a man who claimed to be the leader of 400 Mawozo told a radio station that it was responsible for kidnapping five priests, two nuns and three relatives of one of the priests that month. They were later released.

The spike in kidnappings and gang-related violence has forced Haitians to take detours around certain gang-controlled areas while others opt to stay home, which in turn means less money for people like Charles Pierre, a moto taxi driver in Port-au-Prince who has several children to feed.

"People are not going out in the streets," he said. "We cannot find people to transport."□

Associated Press

from a couple of hundred dollars to more than \$1 million, sometimes killing those they have abducted, according to authorities.

At least 328 kidnappings were reported to Haiti's National Police in the first eight months of 2021, com-

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Travellers' Choice 2020

Cruise Tourism is recovering



ORANJESTAD – The Minister of Tourism and Healthcare, Mr. Dangui Oduber, announced 31 cruise ship calls for November 2021.

It is a substantial increase compared to the original expectations for November. Under normal circumstances, Aruba receives 18 calls for November and December but has increased to 31 confirmed calls for November already.

Compared to October, where there are only 9 calls, November has seen an increase of 22 calls scheduled. The Minister

of Tourism, the APA, and ATA are working proactively to get more cruise lines to visit Aruba, including providing information about the current situation in Aruba. At the same time, they share the safety protocols in place for cruise ships when visiting Aruba. After the last devastating cruise season caused by the pandemic, Aruba is slowly recovering its cruise tourism and soon reach 100% recovery.

In November, cruise ships from a variety of cruise lines will be arriving:

- Celebrity Cruises;
- Royal Caribbean Cruise lines;

- Carnival Cruise Lines;
- TUI Cruises;
- AIDA Cruises;
- Princess Cruises;
- Marella Cruises;
- MSC Cruises;
- Holland America Line;
- Windstar Cruises;
- Azamara Cruises.

Aruba is the first destination for cruise ships and this helps Aruba recover its cruise tourism. Flourishing cruise tourism will create new opportunities for the economy, including more jobs for tour operators, taxi drivers, restaurants, and retail stores. □

Scholarship Event at EPI College



ORANJESTAD — An informal gathering at EPI College announced two scholarships, awarded to top EPI Hospitality & Tourism faculty students. The scholarships were awarded by La Cabana Beach Resort & Casino.

It was an initiative of Circle K-EPI, a service leadership program, affiliated to the Kiwanis Club of Aruba, in partnership with La Cabana Beach Resort & Casino. Circle K was looking for a generous backer and found the resort an eager partner. The school identified two worthy recipients, then General Manager, Joe Najjar, surprised the gathering at EPIlicious restaurant by pledging the scholarship as an annual donation. In his short address Najjar stressed his resort's commitment to community service and talked about the importance of nurturing young leaders. Human Resources Director, Tessely Koolman and Sudi Guda, Talent Manager, also graced the event with their presence. Koolman, wearing two hats, that of the resort and that of Advisor for CK-EPI, highlighted the connection between well-prepared leadership and a top hospitality industry, contributing to a better Aruba.

EPI Hospitality & Tourism Dean of Students Affairs, was grateful for the trust invested in his students and expressed satisfaction over the long term collaboration between the resort and the school.

EPI Hospitality & Tourism College offers three study streams, one for immediate employment, one for professional development through apprenticeship and a third for longer term associate degrees.

In the pictures members of the faculty, and La Cabana Beach Resort representative, with school officials Zahaira Supriana and Charlotte Ponticorvo. The event concluded over delicious fruit punch and homemade gourmet snacks. Congratulation, students for a job well done. □

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Article by Etnia Nativa

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Etnia Nativa is close to high rise Hotels



The wrongly called divi-divi tree

This famous tree was once the property of the then Dutch government. The Watapana-tree is officially called *Caesalpinia Coriaria*. Nowadays people erroneously call it Divi Divi. There are many types or species that people confuses or contains the name with the Watapana. Aruba has only two plants that use the name watapana: one is a big tree and the other one a brush or schrub called Watapana Shimaron *Desmanthus virgatus*, which means shy Watapana which also contained some tannin.

The watapana originally was called and still known as Guatapana in Cuba, Mexico, Puerto Rico and Central America. Pods contain tannic acid and gallic acid. Aruba's Amerindians used to call the pods divi divi. Under this name it was brought on the market in Caracas, to be shipped to Spain and Germany. Today the real local name is being forgotten.

The Watapana grows almost anywhere on the island and the dried leaves are much sought after for enriching the soil. This tree was so important that in the 19th

century onto 1920, that severe penalty was imposed on those who cut a single branch of tree. On lease grounds it was even worse. You needed a special permit by the Lt. Governor to cut one and you better have a very good reason to get such a permit. Twice and three times during a good rainy years seed pods could be collected to be sold and exported. The tree was cared for as to be free from beetles, weevils or termites, for these pests would ruin a harvest. The gathering of the pods (balina's) was the job for women and children. The fruits had to



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be ripe for the best tannin quality concentration. The Watapana meanwhile has become the official tree of Aruba and was so decreed by the Aruban Parliament. It is no coincidence that wherever you see aloes the watapana is also present. Both formed a means of income for the countryside population during more than a century. Aruba produced a considerable part of the total Watapana-crops export to Europe. The principal market was Hamburg in Germany. Divi Divi was used at the tanneries on the Elbe River for the preparation of leather that was manufactured into the greased leather boots of East-European farmers. However, Aruba never shipped direct, everything went via Curacao. In Europe Divi Divi was much in demand and tannin at some places sold for sixty to eighty guilders a ton. One of the best years was 1911, when Aruba exported 303.000 kilos, Curacao 652.000 and Bonaire 1.102.000 kilos. □

Did you say that you love Aruba its origins and cultural heritage? Than this private encounter with our columnist anthropologist is just as you. Sessions created in a gorgeous setting for visitor with special interests. Appointment is required. etnianativa03@gmail.com or Whatsapp us 297 592 2702 for a private reservation.

Tuscany Residence Aruba: Aruba's Luxury Residential Resort with unique Water Villas

NOORD — Within walking distance of the finest white beaches and the clear blue ocean, Tuscany Residence Aruba is founded in one of the best and most popular neighborhoods of Aruba, close to the shopping and nightlife of Palm Beach. Tuscany Residence Aruba brings luxury living to a new level and they are very unique in their offerings with the Daimari Water Villas.

Around 180 exclusive properties will be built in all different sizes and prices, suitable for everyone's wishes and among them are 18 luxury Water Villas, all with a private terrace and direct access to the pool. The Daimari Water Villas include 2 and 3 bedrooms with wardrobes, 2 and 3.5 bathrooms, are fully furnished with a fully equipped German kitchen, fully air-conditioned and with wide aluminum sliding door to the covered pool terraces. Balcony and covered terraces are offered on the 2 floors unit and a private parking in front of the unit or your own garage is all yours. 50% of these amazing houses is already sold! There are still 9 residences available, including 2 with a one car garage.

Tuscany Residences now offer a special pre-construction discount, whereby your advantage increases to 9.7%. Pre-construction prices starting at US\$ 450,775 Turn-Key!

Dutch design

This luxury residential resort with various types of homes has many amenities such as swimming pools, restaurant, bar, offices, meeting rooms, gym, wellness and more. The combination of the beautiful Dutch modern international architecture and the Aruban palm trees creates a luxurious Aruban feeling and relaxed atmosphere in this resort. Tuscany Residence Aruba is the perfect choice for couples and families. Bas de Groot, Managing Director of Tuscany Residence Aruba adds, "We differ from traditional building, our design distinguishes itself." At 8 minutes' walk from Palm Beach, designed in a European style with high-quality materials, on property land and with buying possibilities from condos to townhouses to villas, Tuscany Residence is a dream comes true.



We take care of it all

De Groot adds, "Our project is in continuous construction which builds confidence. He continues saying that maintenance, property management, rental program and safety are taken care of. "You can log in from abroad and manage your property for rental or view your administration." The great thing about Tuscany is that it offers everything equal to a resort but you do not need to wait for an elevator to bring you up, worry about parking space or noisy neighbors. "We have got space and different size offerings making this more a community feel rather than a packed condo building." He also emphasizes that the location is one of the best on Aruba as it is quiet and close to Palm Beach.

Reasons to buy

Reasons to consider Aruba property ownership, at Tuscany Residence Aruba

- Excellent price-quality ratio
- Beautiful designs & Quality construction
- Residential Park with all amenities
- Property land on top-location
- Varies properties in different price range
- Onsite Maintenance Team, Property Management & Rental Program

Are you looking for a safe, quiet, residential area where you will meet a mix of local and foreign owners? Do you feel for a warm community with amenities like wellness, gym, restaurants, pools and this all within a structure where the residence takes care of your property management while you are not here? Can the highest European quality and solid working structure take away your preoccupations while you are home? Than meet us, we are here to convince you with quality!

For an impression of Daimari Water Villas have a look at the website: <https://www.tuscanyresidencearuba.com/en/news>. For more information please contact Bas de Groot by phone +297-7332424 or email bas@tuscanyresidencearuba.com. □

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How the toy shortage could affect your holidays

By Liz Weston of NerdWallet

Many popular toys may sell out long before the holidays, thanks to ongoing pandemic-related disruptions. This could be a disaster — or a great opportunity to reshape how we celebrate.

We can shop earlier and more thoughtfully, resisting the last-minute scramble for “must-have” items that really aren’t. We can choose classic over trendy, handmade over mass-produced. We can swap experiences for stuff and even make this a learning opportunity for our kids.

This approach requires some strategizing but could result in a saner, less stressful holiday.

WHY TOYS MAY BE IN SHORT SUPPLY

Holiday shortages are nothing new. Most years, some trendy toy or gaming console becomes the hot, hard-to-find item when manufacturers and retailers misjudge demand.

What may be different this year is the number of toys in short supply. Most toys and electronics are manufactured in Asia, but bottlenecks at ports are delaying deliveries, while shipping costs have skyrocketed. The cost for shipping containers has risen during the pandemic from about \$3,500 to “well over \$20,000,” says Jonathan Gold, vice president of supply chain and customs policy for the National Retail Federation.

“The supply chain throughout the pandemic has been stretched from end to end,” Gold says.

Higher costs are often passed along to consumers as higher prices. That, and the potential for shortages, should encourage people to start shopping as early as possible, says Jillian Wahlquist, vice president of Tom’s Toys, an independent retailer with three locations in California.

“If there’s a special toy or something that parents are really looking for, buy it now,” Wahlquist says.

HOW TO AVOID THE MAD SCRAMBLE FOR TOYS

Of course, panic buying early in the season can be just as destructive to your budget as waiting until the last minute. Consider drafting a holiday budget now that incorporates all your expected costs, including gifts, decorations, entertaining and travel. Write down all the people you expect to buy presents for, along with the amount you intend to spend, then make adjustments to keep your spending in line with your means to avoid going into debt.

If you’re buying a gift for a child and not sure what they want, or are concerned that their interest will wane by the holidays, consider some alternatives. The first substitute is to choose classic toys that retain their appeal over time. Board games, art supplies, crafting materials

and building toys such as wooden blocks are some possibilities.

Another option: handmade gifts. If you aren’t crafty, you can buy wooden toys, stuffed animals and other handmade options at crafts fairs, farmers markets and online creative marketplaces like Etsy. These can get pricey, but the quality and charm may justify the cost. Plus, you’re benefiting individuals and small businesses rather than retail giants.

Giving experiences can be another great option, especially for teenagers. Researchers at the University of Illinois Chicago found that kids ages 3 to 12 prefer material gifts, while older children get more happiness from experiences. Teenagers have better developed memories and can recall details of an event, which contributes to lasting happiness, the researchers found. Younger children have a harder time remembering and appreciating past experiences, although sharing photos and videos of the event can help, according to the researchers.

Experiences can include passes to a rock-climbing or trampoline gym, a mini-golf course or an amusement park; travel; or lessons to spark or feed a particular interest, such as horseback riding, coding or baking. In normal times, tickets to sporting events, concerts or shows also would be an



This undated file photo provided by NerdWallet shows Liz Weston, a columnist for personal finance website NerdWallet.com.
Associated Press

option, but these may not be feasible or desired during the pandemic.

PLAY THE MEMORY GAME

Speaking of memory, try this with your kids: Ask them what their favorite gift was last year, and the year before, and the year before that. Even teenagers with well-developed memories may have trouble recalling

presents of the past.

The point isn’t to shame kids for not remembering. Rather, you can share the memories you do have, which likely have more to do with the time you spent together than with what you gave each other. Together, you might create a list of what you want to do as a family during the holidays. □

Ford Foundation to divest millions from fossil fuels

The Ford Foundation, one of the largest private foundations in the United States, announced Monday that it will divest millions from fossil fuels, following similar investment decisions made by other sizable foundations in recent years.

For years, climate activists have put pressure on endowed institutions, like Ford, to end their investments in companies involved with producing fossil fuels — coal, oil and natu-

ral gas. MacArthur Foundation, another dominant player in the philanthropy world, and Harvard University both announced last month that their institutions would end investments in fossil fuel related companies. Ford Foundation President Darren Walker said in a statement posted on the organization’s website.

“Although just 0.3% of the Ford Foundation’s endowment is directly invested in fossil fuel companies, we

take our duties as fiduciaries seriously and we’re mindful that if we put restrictions on our investments, we may forsake some amount of return for future generations,” he added.

Going forward, the foundation says it will invest its energy portfolio in alternative and renewable energy, and funds that “address the threat of climate change, and support the transition to a green economy.” The announcement from the



Ford Foundation President Darren Walker attends a reception at the Charles H. Wright Museum in Detroit, on Tuesday, June 16, 2015.

Associated Press

organization -- which has a \$16 billion endowment -- came as donors await the United Nation’s Climate

Change Conference, set to be held in Glasgow, Scotland at the end of this month. □

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 43 Feel
1 Taunts empathy
7 Chess win

DOWN
11 "1984" author
12 Sleep like —
13 Bromantic activity
15 Outlet output
16 Hearty dish
18 Look upon
21 Abacus piece
22 Pigeon perches
24 Phone download
25 For each
26 "Norma —"

1 Male cat
2 Historic time
3 Cobbler's tool
4 Oozed
5 Macaroni shape
6 Lethargic
7 Spain's capital
8 Boxing great
9 Great weight
10 Nest item
14 "Forget it!"
16 Brown shade
17 Spanish snacks
19 Snowy bird
20 Puts sound on
21 Naughty
22 Zodiac sign
23 Ready to go
25 Theater productions
28 Charged
29 Soft color
31 Audacity
33 Lion
34 Gullet
35 Woodsman's tool
36 Sick
37 "— pig's eye!"
38 Cashew or pecan
39 "My word!"

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Yesterday's answer

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	30						31			
			32		33					
34	35	36						37	38	39
40					41					
42					43					

10-19

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

10-19

CRYPTOQUOTE

DR MYG CHJQ UHTQ YR CZQ
BK HFF CZDAXB. CZQ EDX
CZDAXB CHJQ UHTQ YR
CZQ KBQFLQB. — QKDFM
PDUJDABYA

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: I LIKE TO SIT AROUND THE POOL, LISTEN TO MUSIC, BARBECUE, GRILL STUFF LIKE THAT. JUST THE GUY NEXT DOOR. I GUESS — DALE BARNHART JR



An alligator swims in the Maurepas Swamp, thirty miles outside New Orleans, in Ruddock, La., Saturday, Feb. 27, 2021.

Associated Press

Louisiana gators thrive, so farmers' return quota may drop

By JANET McCONNAUGHEY

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Once-endangered alligators are thriving in the wild, so Louisiana authorities are proposing a deep cut in the percentage that farmers must return to marshes where their eggs were laid.

"Over the past 50 years, alligator nest surveys have increased from an estimate of less than 10,000 in the 1970s and 1980s to well over 60,000 nests in recent years," the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission said in a notice published Wednesday. "This increase in nesting has produced a population that can now be sustained with a much lower farm return rate."

The commission is taking comments until Jan. 4 on a proposal to cut that rate from 10% to 5%.

The big armored reptiles don't breed well in captivity, so farmers are allowed to collect eggs from nests as long as they return a percentage to the same area as youngsters big enough to foil predators other than people and much bigger alligators.

Alligator hides are made into luxury leather for products including watchbands, boots and purses. The meat is used in sausages; companies also sell roasts, steaks, ribs, nuggets, jerky and even whole skinned alligators. Forelegs are marketed as "alligator wings." About 1.2 million have been returned since alligator farming was approved in 1986, Jeb Linscombe, head of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries' alligator program, said Thursday. The return percentage was first set at 17%, based on estimates that about 83% die in the egg or before they're 4 feet (1.2 meters) long. A wild-hatched gator that size would be about 4 years old, but readily available food lets farmed alligators grow much faster.

Raccoons, other predators and floods destroy about one-third of all nests. The black and yellow hatchlings are about 8.5 inches (22 centimeters) long and weigh only 2 ounces (57 grams). That makes them easy prey for bigger gators, wading birds, otters and fish even though mother alligators stay with their babies for about a year.

Uncontrolled hunting nearly wiped out American alligators before Louisiana barred all hunting in 1962. Alligator mississippiensis was among the first species federally listed as endangered in 1967, after Congress passed the precursor to the Endangered Species Act.

"The primary reason the species recovered is .. elimination of the black market," Linscombe said.

Louisiana allowed small, highly regulated hunts in 1972 and 1973, opening a statewide season in 1981. Two years later, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service ruled that the species had recovered over most of its range, and it was "de-listed" entirely in 1987. Since 1972, more than 1.1 million wild alligators have been killed, over 11 million alligator eggs have been collected, and nearly 7.3 million farm raised alligators have been sold, according to the state management program's 2019-2020 annual report.

Surveyors who flew over coastal marshes during the summer of 2019 estimated the number of alligator nests at a record, nearly 68,000. This year's estimate was a few thousand below that, Linscombe said. A change in weather patterns is one reason for the big numbers, he said. There are far fewer nests during droughts, when the water is low and there were regular droughts over the first 40 years of state nest surveys. But there haven't been any droughts over the past decade. □

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Boo! Sitcom 'Ghosts' combos misfit spirits, feel-good charm

This image released by CBS shows Utkarsh Ambudkar, foreground left, and Rose McIver in a scene from the comedy series "Ghosts."

Associated Press The title seems to be a dead giveaway, but there's more to the new comedy "Ghosts" than things that go bump in the night. "We totally think of this show as 'What We Do in the Shadows' meets 'Ted Lasso,'" said producer Joe Wiseman.

Substitute misfit spirits for predatory vampires, and a lovable young couple for upbeat Ted, and you'll get an inkling of what Wiseman and collaborator Joe Port have in mind for the CBS sitcom. It airs 9 p.m. EDT Thursday and streams on Paramount+.

"Ghosts" stars Rose McIver and Utkarsh Ambudkar as Samantha and Jay. She's a freelance journalist, he's a chef on the rise, and they're living the big-city life. Then she inherits a mansion in New York's Hudson Valley and, on a whim, enlists a reluctant Jay into renovating it as a bed-and-breakfast.

Turns out, however, it's already inhabited by dead-beat guests with deep emotional ties to the property — they died there — and who are spooked by the idea of sharing their digs with the living.

Among them the eerie eight: a Viking explorer, cir-



This image released by CBS shows Utkarsh Ambudkar, foreground left, and Rose McIver in a scene

ca 1000 A.D. (Devon Chandler Long); a lounge singer from the early 20th century (Danielle Pinnock); 1960s hippie (Sheila Carrasco); 1980s financial shark (Asher Grodman), and a 16th-century indigenous man (Román Zaragoza) with superb comic timing.

A near-fatal accident gives Samantha the ability to see and interact with the departed, who are far more quirky than threatening. The series, based on the lauded BBC series of the same name, films in Montreal as a stand-in for New York.

"When I read the pilot script, it was one of the first

times in a long time I had just laughed out loud. And I love working in comedy TV," McIver said.

She's unsure why "interacting with the afterlife has been a very big part of my career," as she put it, with "iZombie" and "The Lovely Bones" among her TV and movie credits. "I don't particularly seek it out. I don't know if it's something in my complexion," the actor said, drolly.

Ambudkar, who described himself as reluctant to join the series for reasons including the pandemic constraints that delayed its production, credits his co-star's urging with helping to

change his mind.

"Rose kept calling and texting, like, 'Dude, what are you doing? We've got to do this show together.' She was very persistent," said Ambudkar ("Blindspotting," "Never Have I Ever").

The project's clever premise, what he termed a new take on the "dysfunctional family comedy," and its alternate approach to the three-camera sitcom format with a laugh track, eased his concerns about joining a traditional network series.

"I watched five minutes of the BBC show, and I saw the single-camera format," Ambudkar recalled. "I saw

the level of sort of humor that was being employed, and I said, 'This could really work, no matter where it goes.' Sometimes you just have to trust in the product itself, not where it lands."

The two actors eagerly trade compliments.

"We call him a comedic weapon," McIver said. Drawing on his improv experience, "Utkarsh always brings something surprising. We have developed a really good relationship of working out where our strengths are and playing off each other."

"Rose is really dedicated to her craft" and to her castmates, Ambudkar said. "She does all her off-camera work at the same energy level as her on-camera. ... It's really nice when your No. 1 is that present and invested in everyone's success."

McIver said the prospect of getting to work on the series was "a beacon" that helped her weather the COVID-19 pandemic. "And in turn, we hope it brings the audience joy after what's been such a brutal year," she said.

The buoyant, Emmy-darling "Ted Lasso" on Apple TV+ is seen as that kind of antidote, with the further cachet of being part of a streaming universe that has rapidly growing appeal for the TV industry and viewers. □

Review: Elton John taps some talented friends for new album



This cover image released by Interscope Records shows "The Lockdown Sessions" by Elton John.

Associated Press

By MARK KENNEDY
AP Entertainment Writer

It's been more than 35 years since Elton John recorded with Stevie Wonder and that's clearly way, way too long. But the wait is over: The legends join on the new gospel-flavored song "Finish Line," enlivened by Wonder's trademark harmonica and John's piano work. It's a victory lap of a song.

It's also a highlight of John's 16-track album "The Lockdown Sessions," which sees the Rocket Man outsmart the pandemic by working with an eclectic mix of artists, from

Stevie Nicks to Lil Nas X. Not all of it works, but most of it does, and credit John for the supreme musician-ship to bend to his guests' strengths in music's every genre. The album kicks off with the slinky "Cold Heart (PNAU Remix)" — melding John's songs "Kiss the Bride," "Rocket Man," "Where's the Shoorah?" and "Sacrifice" — into a dance bop featuring vocals by Dua Lipa. It's addictive stuff, and the bad part is the song has to end at some point. John then has a twang with Brandi Carlile on "Simple Things" — repeating a line about

the finish line — and a foot-stomping, '70s rock groove with Eddie Vedder on "E-Ticket." But John is a subdued presence on both Lil Nas X's cut "One of Me" and a cover of Metallica's "Nothing Else Matters" with Miley Cyrus, who, turns out, slays at metal singing. John gets glam rocky and spacy on the Gorillaz's "The Pink Phantom" with 6lack, and soars perfectly with Charlie Puth in "After All," but he stumbles in a pairing with Young Thug and Nicki Minaj on "Always Love You," his piano and vocals ill-fitting this particular vehicle. And "Beauty

In the Bones," a duet with country singer Jimmie Allen, is flat since the song is weak tea.

John rights himself on the driving tune "Stolen Car" with Stevie Nicks, duets beautifully with rising star Rina Sawayama on track "Chosen Family" and the album ends on a poignant note with "I'm Not Gonna Miss You," his Pro Tools collaboration with the late Glen Campbell, who died in 2017. "I'm still here/And yet I'm gone," Campbell sings while John somehow transcends the ultimate finish line. Long may he run. □

WNBA looks ahead to 2022 season with potential changes

By DOUG FEINBERG
AP Basketball Writer

Candace Parker made the biggest move last off-season choosing to return home to Chicago. The decision paid off as the WNBA star led the Sky to the franchise's first championship. Chicago will have choices to make if it wants to become the first repeat champion since the Los Angeles Sparks did it in 2001-02. WNBA Finals MVP Kahleah Copper is an unrestricted free agent, as are married Sky teammates Courtney Vandersloot and Allie Quigley. Besides Chicago, the rest of the WNBA could have a different look next year with potential movement as some of the league's biggest names are available. In the past, many of the WNBA's top players didn't move too often, but the collective bargaining agreement that was ratified in 2020 has allowed for more player movement by reducing the number of times teams could potentially force their top player to stay by coring them. While it's unlikely, regular-season MVP Jonquel Jones of Connecticut and former top award winners Breanna Stewart of Seattle and Tina Charles of Washington all could change teams this offseason. Stewart just recently had surgery for a minor repair and reinforcement of the Achilles tendon in her left leg, the team announced Thursday. It



Chicago Sky's Candice Parker right, celebrates with head coach James Wade left, after defeating the Phoenix Mercury in Game 4 of the WNBA Finals to become champions Sunday, Oct. 17, 2021, in Chicago.

wasn't the same Achilles she tore overseas a few years ago. She potentially will be headed overseas at some point this winter to play on her Russian league team. Many of the WNBA's players have already headed overseas to play in their winter leagues to supplement their incomes. League greats Sue Bird and Diana Taurasi will also have to make choices whether they want to come back and play. Bird, who turned 41 over the weekend, said she'll sit down with her family and discuss whether she wants to play another year in Seattle. The Storm will be back in their new renovat-

ed home arena next year which could be a huge reason for the league's all-time assist leader to return. Taurasi has one year left on her contract in Phoenix, and said that she'll sit down with her wife Penny Taylor and figure out what she wants to do. The couple just welcomed their second child before the WNBA Finals.

Here are a few other things that could change next year:

SEASON FORMAT

The WNBA continues to grow with strong ratings and social media engagements. Next season will potentially have a 36-game

schedule — the most the league has played. There's also discussions of a new playoff format that's supported by players and coaches, as well as some league executives. The current structure, which has been in place since 2016, rewards the top teams with byes until the semifinals and has single elimination games in the opening two rounds.

This season marked the first time that neither one of the top two teams made the WNBA Finals since the league changed its postseason format. Chicago was a six seed and Phoenix a five. The Sky

won the championship in four games to cap off the league's 25th season.

"I'm sure whatever we change it to in the next three to five years, we'll be looking at it again because there's pros and cons to every different playoff format," Commissioner Cathy Engelbert said during her state of the league address at the Finals. "So we want to be very thoughtful about what we do."

EXPANSION

The WNBA is also looking into adding more teams.

"Expansion is on the horizon," Engelbert said.

She said that the league is conducting a data analysis to find potential expansion cities using about 15 metrics to evaluate different locations and hopes to have a more concrete answer during the 2022 season.

"The data looks like it's going to read out some interesting information for us to start having exploratory discussions with certain cities," Engelbert said. "Make sure that we can find great ownership groups to support a WNBA team and great fan bases. So that's why I think looking at how those cities are already supporting the WNBA, whether it's viewership, merch sales or other things or whether they're supporting women's sports or women's college basketball are great indicators of how it would get supported if a WNBA team were to go in that market." □

New hoops league for prep standouts signs deal with Gatorade

ATLANTA (AP) — A startup basketball league with goals of giving high school players another option besides the college route has added Gatorade as its first brand sponsor. Overtime Elite (OTE) announced the multiyear deal to The Associated Press on Monday. The terms were not released. OTE is scheduled to tip off its inaugural season in Atlanta on Oct. 29 with a full slate of games scheduled to showcase the talents of

27 players split into three teams. The new pro league markets itself to high schoolers and guarantees an academic education along with a six-figure salary.

"We are doing something big and bold — building a league with an unprecedented holistic approach on an accelerated timeline — and Gatorade aligned with us on our mission," said Aaron Ryan, the commissioner and president of OTE. "To have Gatorade on board with us at ground lev-

el allows us to educate and prepare our young athletes from the beginning of their path to become pros."

Games will be played at OTE's 103,000-square-foot complex in Atlanta, which was just recently completed. Gatorade will have a big presence at the complex.

"Overtime Elite represents a unique connectivity with our audience, which allows us to engage directly with athletes during and beyond the moment of



This photo provided by Overtime Elite shows, from left, Matt Bewley, Jai Smith, Ryan Bewley and Tyler Smith posed in Atlanta in August 2021.

Associated Press

sweat," said Jeff Kearney, global head of sports marketing at Gatorade.

OTE was launched through the sports media company Overtime. □

NFL loaded with mediocre teams 6 weeks into season

By **ROB MAADDI AP**
Pro Football Writer

Six weeks into the NFL season and each conference has only six teams with a winning record.

A league that prides itself on parity is loaded with mediocre and poor teams.

Five clubs have one win, the Lions are winless and four division races are all but over, barring major injuries to the first-place teams. Even the two-time defending AFC champion Kansas City Chiefs are just 3-3.

At least the race for the No. 1 overall draft pick will be intriguing.

Detroit (0-6) is the front-runner, but Houston, Miami, Jacksonville, the Giants and Jets each have a real shot with only one win.

The Dolphins traded the pick to the Eagles, so they can't even benefit from losing. Miami expected to compete for a playoff spot after finishing 10-6 last year, but the Dolphins have lost five in a row after letting the Jaguars snap a 20-game losing streak on Sunday in London.

Passing up Justin Herbert for Tua Tagovailoa may haunt Miami for a decade. They'll need Jaylen Waddle to become a superstar to justify giving up an extra first-rounder to draft him at No. 6.

The Lions may be the best of this bunch despite a 34-11 loss to Cincinnati. They were close to two wins before losing to Baltimore on



Detroit Lions head coach Dan Campbell walks the sideline during the first half of an NFL football game against the Cincinnati Bengals, Sunday, Oct. 17, 2021, in Detroit.

Associated Press

Justin Tucker's record-setting 66-yard field goal and to Minnesota on a 54-yarder as time expired.

The Texans should be the favorite to finish with the worst record if they stick with rookie Davis Mills when Tyrod Taylor returns. Houston has been outscored by an average margin of 13.3 points per game and still hasn't resolved the Deshaun Watson dilemma.

The Jags had to leave the country to finally earn their first win with Urban Meyer and Trevor Lawrence. Meyer's transition to the NFL hasn't been smooth, but he has a franchise quarterback in Lawrence.

The banged-up Giants keep losing players as the losses pile up. They had no chance against the Rams, who weren't satisfied with a 38-11 rout over New York. The Jets (1-4) enjoyed their bye more than most of their Sundays.

The East is the least in both the NFC and AFC.

The Cowboys (5-1) have won as many games as Washington (2-4), Philadelphia (2-4) and the Giants combined after rallying for an overtime victory at New England. If Dak Prescott stays healthy — he's scheduled for an MRI on Monday after straining his calf on the winning touchdown

pass against the Patriots — Dallas should wrap up the NFC East by Thanksgiving. Same for Buffalo (4-1) in the AFC East, as long as Josh Allen doesn't go down. The Bills would surpass the combined win total of New England (2-4), Miami and the Jets with a victory at Tennessee on Monday night. The Patriots are 0-4 at home for the first time in Bill Belichick's 22 seasons as coach.

Tampa Bay (5-1) and Green Bay (5-1) each have two-game leads and should cruise to division titles, barring injuries. The defending Super Bowl champion Buccaneers haven't even hit

their peak yet. Tampa has been hit hard with injuries, especially in the secondary. Tom Brady is off to an excellent start and the offense still is improving. The Bucs had a weekend off to rest and recover after a 28-22 win at Philadelphia on Thursday that wasn't as close as the score.

Aaron Rodgers and the Packers still own the Bears following a 24-14 victory at Soldier Field. Chicago (3-3) and Minnesota (3-3) aren't in Green Bay's class.

Carolina (3-3) and Denver (3-3) each started 3-0, but they've proven they're not serious contenders after losing three straight.

The AFC South could give both East divisions a run for futility. The Titans (3-2) have a tough matchup Monday night against Buffalo. It'll be a two-team race with Indianapolis (2-4) for the top spot after Carson Wentz looked more like his old self in the Colts' win over Houston. But the division winner should end up with a winning record thanks to four games against the Texans and Jaguars.

The NFL has some elite teams. Arizona is 6-0. Tampa, Green Bay, the Rams and Dallas are 20-4 combined. Injury-depleted Baltimore (5-1) has been impressive, and the Bills made a statement last week routing Kansas City.

But far more clubs have no chance to win much this season. □



Tampa Bay Lightning right wing Nikita Kucherov (86) makes his way to the bench after he was injured during the third period of an NHL hockey game against the Washington Capitals, Saturday, Oct. 16, 2021, in Washington.

Associated Press

Lightning's Kucherov out indefinitely with lower-body injury

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — Tampa Bay Lightning star Nikita Kucherov will be out indefinitely with a lower-body injury he suffered late in the two-time defending Stanley Cup champions' overtime win over the Washington Capitals last weekend.

"It's definitely not a day-to-day thing, so we'll wait until we get an official word, but he's definitely out," Lightning coach Jon Cooper said after prac-

tice Monday. "He's going to be out for a while here. We're not going to put a timetable on it until we get an official word. In the short term here he's definitely out."

Kucherov missed all of the 2020-21 regular season after undergoing hip surgery in the offseason. He returned in the playoffs to have eight goals and 24 assists to help the Lightning win their second consecutive Stanley Cup.

The 2019 Hart Trophy winner appeared to suffer an abdominal or groin injury chasing a puck during the third period of a 2-1 overtime victory at Washington last Saturday night.

"I'm more frustrated for him because I just know the work it took for him to get back," Cooper said. "He was rewarded in the end with hoisting the Stanley Cup again, but I know he was looking forward to having a big year." □